

Amendments to the Claims

1. (previously amended) A bale handling apparatus comprising:
a frame;
an accumulating platform for supporting a plurality of bales, wherein the accumulating platform is pivotably coupled to the frame to selectively move between a horizontal bale accumulating position and a vertical bale unloading position; and
a loading mechanism pivotably coupled to the accumulating platform, wherein the loading mechanism is configured to receive a bale,
said loading mechanism including a loading platform pivotably coupled with the accumulating platform for selective movement between a generally upright position for picking up bales from the ground and a raised position generally in line with the accumulating platform for supporting picked up bales above the ground,
said loading mechanism further including a sliding mechanism operable on both the loading platform and the accumulating platform for moving bales from the loading platform onto the accumulating platform when the loading platform is in its raised position.
2. (previously cancelled)
3. (previously amended) A bale handling apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein the sliding mechanism comprises:
a chain;
a sprocket configured to receive the chain, wherein the sprocket is pivotably coupled to the accumulating platform; and
a push bar coupled to the chain, wherein the push bar is configured to contact the bale.

4. (previously amended) A bale handling apparatus comprising:

a frame;

a platform for supporting a plurality of bales, wherein the platform is pivotably coupled to the frame to selectively move between a horizontal position and a vertical position; and

a loading mechanism pivotably coupled to the platform, wherein the loading mechanism is configured to receive a bale, further comprising a sliding mechanism that is configured to move a bale from the loading mechanism to the platform, wherein the sliding mechanism is coupled to the platform and to the loading mechanism, wherein the sliding mechanism comprises:

a chain;

a sprocket configured to receive the chain, wherein the sprocket is pivotably coupled to the platform; and

a push bar coupled to the chain, wherein the push bar is configured to contact the bale, wherein the push bar comprises at least one of:

- (i) a toothed edge that is configured to poke into a surface of the bale; and
- (ii) a lip that is configured to maintain the contact with the bale.

5. (previously amended) A bale handling apparatus comprising:
a frame;
a platform for supporting a plurality of bales, wherein the platform is pivotably coupled to the frame to selectively move between a horizontal position and a vertical position;
and
a loading mechanism pivotably coupled to the platform, wherein the loading mechanism is configured to receive a bale,
further comprising a sliding mechanism that is configured to move a bale from the loading mechanism to the platform, wherein the sliding mechanism is coupled to the platform and to the loading mechanism,
wherein the sliding mechanism comprises:
a chain;
a sprocket configured to receive the chain, wherein the sprocket is pivotably coupled to the platform; and
a push bar coupled to the chain, wherein the push bar is configured to contact the bale,
further comprising a chain tensioner that is configured to maintain the chain taut.

6. (previously amended) A bale handling apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein the loading mechanism comprises one or more arms pivotably coupled to the loading platform.

7. (cancelled)

8. (original claim) A bale handling apparatus as recited in claim 1, wherein the frame includes a tandem axle.

9. (original claim) A bale handling apparatus as recited in claim 1, further comprising an unloading mechanism coupled to the frame.

10. (original claim) A bale handling apparatus as recited in claim 9, wherein the unloading mechanism comprises a push-off mechanism.

11. (original claim) A bale handling apparatus as recited in claim 10, wherein the push-off mechanism is powered by a hydraulic cylinder and comprises a shaft that is configured to slide in relation with a guide.

12. (original claim) A bale handling apparatus as recited in claim 1, further comprising a control system coupled to the frame.

13. (original claim) A bale handling apparatus as recited in claim 12, wherein the control system includes at least one of:

- (i) a computer device;
- (ii) a sensor; and
- (iii) a switch.

14. (original claim) A bale handling apparatus as recited in claim 13, wherein the computer device is a controller.

15. (previously amended) A method for handling bales, the method comprising the steps of:

receiving a bale at a loading mechanism;
selectively pivoting the loading platform from a vertical position to a horizontal position, wherein the pivoting is performed at a coupling of the loading platform with a horizontal accumulating platform that is configured to support the bale; and
engaging a sliding mechanism on the loading platform and the accumulating platform when the loading platform is in its horizontal position to move the bale from the loading platform onto the accumulating platform to locate the bale on the accumulating platform.

16. (previously amended) The method as recited in claim 15, further comprising carrying out said receiving, selectively pivoting, and engaging steps with more than one bale at a time.

17. (previously amended) The method as recited in claim 15, further comprising the step of selectively pivoting the accumulating platform from a horizontal platform position to a vertical platform position.

18. (previously amended) The method as recited in claim 17, further comprising the step of engaging a pushing mechanism to push the bale away from the accumulating platform while the accumulating platform is in the vertical platform position.

19. (previously amended) The method as recited in claim 15, wherein the step of engaging the sliding mechanism is performed by a computer device.

20. (previously amended) A computer program product for implementing within a computer system a method for handling bales, the computer program product comprising:

- a computer readable medium for providing computer program code means utilized to implement the method, wherein the computer program code means is comprised of executable code for implementing at least one of the steps of:
 - selectively implementing a pivoting of a loading platform of a loading mechanism from a vertical position to a horizontal position, wherein the loading has received a bale, and wherein the pivoting is performed at a coupling of the loading platform with a horizontal accumulating platform that is configured to support the bale;
 - selectively engaging a sliding mechanism to move the bale from the loading platform onto the accumulating platform to locate the bale on the accumulating platform;
 - selectively pivoting the accumulating platform from a horizontal platform position to a vertical platform position; and
 - engaging a pushing mechanism to push the bale away from the accumulating platform while the accumulating platform is in the vertical platform position to unload the bale.